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OPACITY: A Socioeconomic Study of Diamond Mining in South-Eastern Cameroon

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OPACITY:

A Socioeconomic Study of Diamond Mining in South-Eastern Cameroon

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ABSTRACT

Diamond mining in the southeastern Cameroon is on the cusp of a boom of development. Artisanal diamond miners served as the “beacon” for an industrial mining company, C&K, to explore and attempt to gain permission to commence exploitation. There are massive social, economic and environmental implications depending on the execution of exploitation. It is the role of the government bodies and the corporation to identify sustainable methods to develop this untapped natural resource and the surrounding infrastructure. The region is an isolated throwback; its basic functions are, in essence, dated four decades. They need improved simple infrastructure, although the local populations do not, at this time, warrant all of their demands for development. The diamond site at Mobilong exemplifies the Cameroonian government’s secretive attempts to properly exploit a rich natural resource after their fabulous squanders in the oil and timber industries. However, at the basic level, lack of transparency and communication are securing another tremendous failure to capitalize on an economic milestone. This report attempts to inquire in the reports of fantastic diamond deposits in Mobilong, interpret the efficiencies and management of the parties involved and provide a socioeconomic forecast for diamond mining in Cameroon.

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Introduction

Diamond mining in Africa has a tense past and an uncertain future. Cameroon is attempting, quietly, to ensure that they do not provide another red stain on the African diamond map. With findings of massive diamond reserves in southeast Cameroon, specifically a site called Mobilong, Cameroon may be the next great diamond producer in the world. Geological estimates peg the potential of diamond production in Cameroon at five times the current annual production of diamonds in the world. The site at Mobilong is currently still in the exploration phase, but in the near future, both the Cameroonian government and the industrial company, C&K, hope to begin exploitation.

There have been very few studies of this particular diamond site. Those conducted were primarily environmental and conducted by internal actors (mining company and government). This study is, in essence, non-environmental, but because of the circumstances of the exploitative industry, environmental facets overlap social and economic impacts. By working in the domain of people who make their home and income off the forest, the change of their habitat naturally affects their economic climate. To date, there have been almost no forays into the socio-economic potential of the diamond mines at Mobilong that have been made available to the public. In this region of Cameroon, the environment is the focus of the well-funded, autonomous research organizations of the region like the World Wildlife Fund (WWF).

Mining in Cameroon is universally perceived as the next great economic opportunity for an economic vault forward. Looking at the work of Geovic, an American mining company exploiting cobalt and nickel in the south of Cameroon, the region and Cameroon as a nation has received serious infrastructural and economic benefits. Unfortunately, mining companies, like

their forestry counterparts, historically implicate the social standards of the local community via their exploitative work. For Cameroon specifically, this project glows with great potential, but is also frightening because of the country's corruption and inability to negotiate their proper financial merits from their natural resources.

The study began in Yaoundé, conversing with government officials, experts on mining, corporations and NGOs. But the bulk of the work was done between Youkadouma, the capital of the southeast region where all of the real, knowledgeable administrators of the project were located, Mobilong and the surrounding villages. The research zooms to the local level, but because of the vast potential of the site, it also hypothesizes on the implications on both the state and international level. The true indications from this research are the lack of communication, the secrecy of the actors with money and the lack of transparency. Like all especially rare gems, the situation could come out clear, transparent and valuable or the site at Mobilong could be opaque and have less worth.

Methodology

Beginning this project, I intended to learn as much as I could about the diamond industry, but I had no initial hypotheses due to lack of knowledge. However, before leaving for the site itself, I developed three hypotheses as a result of my secondary information and initial interviews:

- A. Mining in Cameroon and the site in Mobilong in particular are still in their exploration and planning stages.
- B. The government's approach to the development of mining in Cameroon is careful because of past problems with other extractive industries such as timber and oil.

- C. Mobilong does meet, to an extent, its potential as an enormous diamond site. But does not adequately compensate or use the local populations.

These hypotheses were followed by a set of major research questions that guided my interviews, meetings, observations, data collection and use of secondary sources, at the actual site, Mobilong, and Youkadouma (government documents, books, previous research).

- A. How does diamond mining take place? Is it parallel to the stated goals (conservation, distribution of funds, collection of taxes, etc)? Are the processes efficient?
- B. What are the roles in the procurement of diamonds in artisanal mining? And in industrial mining?
- C. What is the potential for the diamond mines at Mobilong? How and what are the factors involved to reach that potential?
- D. Why is the diamond industry and the mines at Mobilong kept in such secrecy?

With these questions in mind I set out to gather personal and expert opinions through interviews with all the levels of the mining process, and all those parties affected. This list included: government officials, corporate representatives, geologists, NGOs that deal in the mining sector, inter-governmental bodies, local populations and artisanal miners. My interviews were both formally and informally conducted. And as the project developed it became clearer the types of questions I would ask based on my growing knowledge of the processes. At the beginning of each interview, if not pre-arranged, I notified the informant of their rights to confidentiality and asked permission to use either a tape-recorder or to take notes. I also gave each interviewee the opportunity to pose questions to me. Their questions included my perceptions of mining, Cameroonian development and comparative questions between extractive

industries in the U.S. and here in Cameroon. In total I conducted 35 interviews over the course of two and a half months.

There are two subsets to the larger methodological track of interviews that I also participated in: “reunions” or group meetings with a specific population and corporate meetings, which are also different than interviews because of the number of people and format of the questioning. The “reunions” that I gathered information from was the gathering of a community, a section of a population. This method of collecting information was best for discerning shared opinions and allowing those who were more hesitant in one-on-one situations to voice their opinions in the presences of their friends or colleagues. I conducted four of these reunions. Corporate meetings were a necessary facet of conducting interviews. Often, these meetings would involve specialists in each of the company’s areas of interest so that there was not a representative speaking out of his/her area of expertise. These meetings provided important insights from the corporation, but also gave less of a personalized/opinionated view of situations and more of a by-the-book answer. I conducted 17 of these meetings beginning in October and continuing through December.

My second methodological approach to gathering information was through observations and photographing. I used this method only in the field. Observations served as an important part of my research. During my research period, there were many times when I was refused an interview, or when I was observing sites in a solitary expedition. This facet of my research allowed me an unbiased, objective view of a situation. Photographing gave permanence to my observations and allowed me to reflect on situations that passed quickly. A limitation of this method was security: because of the trafficking and banditry associated with the region, I was

hesitant to use my camera in situations that I felt were unsafe or imprudent. These observations occurred only between November 15th and December 1st, my time in the field.

My final method of information collection was the use of secondary source data. This included: previous studies in mining, government publications and reports, forestry and mining law, books on mining (both general and specific to Cameroon), international publications on diamond production, etc. It was my intention to collect as much information as possible before arriving at the actual site due to my lack of expertise on the subject. I intended to be well-versed in the subject. My pre-research allowed me to participate in technical discussions and gave context to historical perspectives of mining and other opinions of the processes.

The project was filled with many limitations and barriers to information. Most commonly, I was regarded as a spy from a government or a corporation. People were also suspicious of my intentions with the information. The industry reeks of deception and sketchy characters, so follow me as I carve a path through a fog of lack of transparency, secrecy and misinformation.

Brief History of Mining in Cameroon

The documented history of mining in Cameroon dates 101 years, but has only begun to realize its potential as an economic activity in the last 6 to 8 years. As far back as pre-colonial times, artisanal, small-scale mining of gemstones was an economic activity for local populations.¹ The beginning of documented mining explorations aligned with German colonization in 1908: a German exploration reported the finding of gemstones, but little was made of these explorations. For the following 20 years, exploration and exploitation remained

¹ Fanson, V.G. Cameroon History for Secondary Schools and Colleges: Vol. 2. The Colonial and Post-Colonial Periods. Macmillan Cameroon. Lime: 1989. p5.

dormant as colonial regimes and their respective focuses changed. However at the start of the 1930s, mineral projects restarted and by 1939, the mining sector was contributing 11.7% to the nation's economic production.² These projects were primarily the artisanal exploitation of gold—river gold and products made of gold. In the following years, the colonial mining service began to draft geological maps of the known natural resources of the country.³ This led to the colonial government's final, grand plan before they were ejected from the country: a major aluminum metallurgy and electrical complex in Edea: Alucam. The purpose of this hydro-electric industrial complex was to process aluminum and generate energy. The project cost 26 billion CFA and employed three thousand Cameroonian workers to build the plant. After completion, the plant continued to keep a permanent staff of 600 Cameroonians and 100 French administrators. In 1956, the fully operational plant began to produce 45 thousand tons of aluminum each year.⁴ By 1960, Cameroon had gained independence from both its French and British colonial administrators and under the presidency of Ahmadou Ahidjo, moved into a new and reallocated concentration of their economy.⁵

After the departure of colonial powers and Cameroon's ascent to autonomy, the exploration of Cameroon's subterranean natural resources disappeared as a priority of the government. Instead Cameroon began to turn to its forestry and electricity sectors: each resource was in vogue and had waiting exploiters. At the time, nobody suspected nor had the evidence to point to underground wealth in Cameroon. And under Ahidjo and then the first 15 years of Paul Biya, there were minimal attempts to research the prospects for mining in Cameroon despite the

² Ntep Gweth, Paul. Ressources Minérales du Cameroun. Société de Presse et d'Éditions du Cameroun (SOPECAM). Yaoundé : 2001. p iv.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Fanso, 122.

⁵ Dze-Ngwa, Willibroad. Lecture-The History of Cameroon. Yaoundé: 10/9/09.

forestry companies working alongside artisanal miners. Only the UNDP did a large scale investigation of the natural resources on Cameroon, but their study was not intensive enough to produce many real results.⁶ However, at the beginning of the 1990s, there was a change in approaches to the economy. With political turmoil and social failures in the forestry sector, the Biya administration began looking to alternative exploitative industries. The next large project was the exploitation of the oil industry. Cameroon has many petroleum resources; but in order to splash onto the international petroleum scene, Cameroon needed to incorporate other oil wells. With great financial assistance from the World Bank, Cameroon delved into its most extensive project into the natural resources arena, the construction of the Chad-Cameroon Pipeline. This massive, \$4.2 billion dollar project, in cooperation with ExxonMobil, the American oil company, proved to be a social, environmental and, for Cameroon, economic failure. The project ended up supporting undemocratic governments, displacing indigenous people and razing a line through the heart of Cameroon.⁷ It was during the creation of the pipeline that Cameroon truly began to make forays into the mining sector, using their limited number of experts (and some friends of the Presidency), to set up government bodies to administer artisanal mining and distribute exploration and exploitation permits.

This level of modern mining is relatively new for Africa, but even newer for Cameroon. In 2003, there was a single mining permit, exploration or exploitation, issued. Since then, over 80 mining exploration and exploitation permits are underway. Today there are exploration permits issued in all 10 regions of Cameroon for mining, with nearly every natural resource

⁶ Nkamouna Project Environmental and Social Assessment, Executive Summary. Geovic Cameroon: Yaoundé. March 2007. P15.

⁷ Schwartz, Brendan. World Bank Policy: The Extractive Industries Review and the Chad-Cameroon Pipeline. SIT Switzerland, Spring 2006.

highlighted.⁸ The future for Cameroonian mining is bright. Because of the years of ignorance to the potential of the country's mineral wealth, the sector remains nearly untouched and has potential to vault Cameroon into mining distinction. Subterranean natural resources found in Cameroon include: Gold, diamond, sapphire, bauxite, nickel, copper, uranium, iron, platinum, titanium, aluminum, graphite, zinc, cobalt and petroleum.⁹ With industrial booms in Asia and South America recommencing, each of these natural resources, if properly and fairly managed could generate jobs and income for a large part of the Cameroonian unemployed. Workers' qualifications range from no education (daily workers) to geologists and business related aspects of post-production. In addition, the projects will generate infrastructure that the population is in need of. The sole example, to date, of Cameroonian mineral exploitation is the Geovic cobalt and nickel mines in the South-East. Geovic, an American company, was the first mining exploration and exploitation permits in 1994 and 2003 respectively.¹⁰ The project has brought many improvements to the once dense forest. Healthcare centers have appeared as a result of their work and most significantly, the regions roads have seen major improvement.¹¹ The project in Lomié will continue to generate up to 55 billion CFA for Cameroon's GDP over the life of the project in addition to employment opportunities.¹² With all the exploration permits currently underway, it seems that Cameroon is merely preparing for an overhaul of its entire industrial sector spearheaded by the exploitation of its mineral resources.

⁸ Interview, Paul Ntep Gweth, Yaoundé, 22/10/09.

⁹ Interview, Ministry of Mines, Yaoundé, 21/10/09.

¹⁰ Nkamouna Project Environmental and Social Assessment, Executive Summary. P2.

¹¹ Observation, Lomié, 28/11/09.

¹² Nkamouna Project Environmental and Social Assessment, Executive Summary. p3.

Diamonds—Cameroon and African Context

Much like their natural form, the perception of diamonds in Africa is rough and full of scars. Much blood has been spilt over these precious gemstones. But, diamonds have not solely brought conflict to those countries that have them beneath their feet. For many countries, especially in recent years, diamonds have brought an economic stimulus onto the international markets: a source of development and infrastructure. Diamonds have been identified as present in six places in Cameroon: the vicinity around Youkadouma, both on the border with Central African Republic and directly to the north and northwest; in the far south-east by Lobeké National Park; around the vicinity of Kette; in the northeast, by Garoua-Boulai; to the northwest of Ngaoundéré, by Poli; and in the northwest region, to the west of Bamenda.¹³ However, the largest of these known deposits is in the South-East at a site known as Mobilong. Cameroon began official diamond exploration in 2006 and has yet to begin exploitation, although all signs point towards that eventual goal.¹⁴ The original source of the diamond discoveries came from artisanal miners: groups of small-scale, traditional miners that have been quarrying gemstones and precious metals across Cameroon for centuries. Today, these miners risk extinction with Cameroon realizing its underground potential and subsequently doling out exploration permits for almost all prospective diamond sites to large, foreign companies. But within the last year, diamond exploration has slowed. It seems that C&K and other diamond prospectors have all succeeded in identifying the targeted places for industrial exploitation and are awaiting the necessary permissions. However, Cameroon is not being so hasty to concede this natural

¹³ Mineral Resources Thematic Map on a Geological Background.

¹⁴ Interview, C&K, Youkadouma, 25/11/09; Interview, Confidential, Youkadouma, 27/11/09.

resource without taking some precautions. Currently, Cameroon has formed a committee to ratify the Kimberly Process; the reason for the sudden barrier to exploitation.¹⁵

The Kimberly Process

The Kimberly Process is the United Nations-approved process against the production, sale and transport of conflict diamonds. Currently, Cameroon is attempting to pass the Kimberly Process, an indication of imminent large-scale diamond exploitation. The Kimberly Process is composed of 49 countries and another 28 partners following set processes for the production, shipment and sale of rough diamonds. Cameroon's agreement to join this group would put major restrictions on its latitude of operation, but also protect against sanctions and abuse of resources by the extracting companies.¹⁶ The Kimberly Process was originally instated to combat the results of trade in conflict diamonds, namely: armed conflict, abuse of human rights and instability.¹⁷ To combat these effects and historical conflicts, the Kimberly process calls for each shipment of rough diamonds to be inspected and certified to meet certain criteria: 1. That each importer or exporter is a member of the Kimberly Process and each shipment of diamonds is accompanied by a Kimberly certificate; 2. That each government that signs the Kimberly Process should initiate internal regulations to maintain official, sanctioned production of diamonds; 3. That each member should cooperate with the collective decisions of the Kimberly Process and have transparency in their actions.¹⁸ Under these major points, there are details on the operation of diamond mines, the export and import of diamonds and other general recommendations.¹⁹ If Cameroon implemented these parameters, they would reach the first stage of precautionary

¹⁵ Interview, Confidential, Yaoundé, 10/11/09.

¹⁶ Kimberly Process Website. The Kimberly Process, Namibia.

http://www.kimberleyprocess.com/home/index_en.html Last Updated: 30/11/09.

¹⁷ Kimberly Process Certification Scheme, p1.

¹⁸ Ibid, p5-8.

¹⁹ Ibid, p13-15.

action before diving into the diamond mining sector. The Kimberly Process would protect against: extortion or forced labor in the diamond mines, price-gouging or corruption involving the actual product (diamonds) and unlicensed/illegal workers. The process would also bring the focus and aid of the international community against potential conflicts involving the Central African Republic, Cameroon's neighbor (1.5 km from the site). The Kimberly Process is one of the first steps to combating the problems of lack of communication, transparency and fraudulent activities.

Take, for example, three other, comparable African countries that have passed the Kimberly Process: Angola, Botswana and the Central African Republic. Angola is the most prevalent example of historical conflict diamond trafficking. Before the Kimberly Process, Angola was in a constant state of civil war; battling with internal warlords for control of the diamond fields. This conflict was a holdover from a repressive Portuguese colonial regime. There were also internal conflicts within the government, as they hired mercenaries to battle the warlords. But, with the help of the Kimberly Process, the country has decreased the export of conflict diamonds and brought structure to the diamond mining activities in the region.²⁰

Diamonds are difficult to export without the Kimberly stamp of approval. This is not to say that the situation has been fixed, because today there are still vast problems of corruption, extortion and forced labor.²¹ But the situation has been ameliorated and vast quantities of blood-free diamonds are exported from Angola each year. Botswana is the opposite example of diamond exploitation in Africa. Through the use of proper management of the diamond sites and good governance, Botswana has been able to take full advantage of their diamond deposits. The largest

²⁰ Pearce, Justin. War, Peace and Diamonds in Angola: Popular Perceptions of the diamond industry in the Lundas. Africa Watch: Africa Security Review, 13(2), 2004.

²¹ Ibid.

company operating in Botswana, Debswana, is half-owned by the government and half-owned by De Beers, the world's primary manufacturer and vendor of diamonds. Botswana is also aware that its economy's dependence on diamond trade will come to an end eventually and is taking the necessary steps to reroute their economic focus. Currently the diamond trade accounts for 40% of Botswana's GDP.²² Their Kimberly partners have been helping them to create a plan to continue their diamond activities and also use the expertise gained from diamond exploitation in other industrial sectors. Finally, the Central African Republic represents the most similar geographical situation and access to trade as Cameroon. The CAR is ranked fifth in the world in terms of the quality of its diamonds. This bodes well for the future of diamond mining in Cameroon, since the vast majority of the CAR's diamonds are on the same geological fault lines as the site at Mobilong. Additionally, diamonds account for nearly 60% of the CAR's national export earnings. But because of limited control over the industry, corruption and bad transparency, CAR has not reached its potential for production and revenue generated from diamonds.²³ The Kimberly process has helped the CAR to begin to transfer from regional dictatorships over diamond exploitation to mass, fair-trade production and its subsequent outcomes. Cameroon can learn from each of these countries because of similarities in situation: geological, social and economic. The Kimberly process can aid with many of the major problems that have limited the potential of diamond industries in foreign countries, and in Cameroon. The solution, as the Kimberly Process has proved, is transparency, good governance and fluid communication.

²² Botswana Country Brief. The World Bank Group.
<http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/COUNTRIES/AFRICAEXT/BOTSWANAEXTN/0,,menuPK:322821~pagePK:141132~piPK:141107~theSitePK:322804,00.html> Last Updated: September 2009.

²³ Diamond Mining in Central African Republic—Overview. Mbendi Information Services. Last Updated: December, 2009.

Mobilong

Mobilong is located 80 kilometers to the south-east of Youkadouma, the closest major city. The site straddles the border with the Central African Republic and is accessible by automobile; however, the road is unkempt and best if taken by motorbike or a four-wheel-drive car. To access the site one must travel to Youkadouma, the timber capital of Cameroon, and then take a fifty kilometer voyage to Mboy II, the village which accesses the site by another fifty kilometer forestry road. The site stretches across an area of 50 kilometers along the border with Central African Republic; it is 5 kilometers in width.²⁴ Within the site, there are many small exploration sites with heavy machinery to excavate the land. Villages of artisanal mining residences, administrative buildings and security posts accompany each of these miniature encampments. The camps are basic; even the “base camp” is composed of mostly mud and thatch huts. The sole transformation of the site with the introduction of a company instead of solely artisans is the heavy machinery and its work: carving out a small desert within the dense jungle (See Appendix A).²⁵ Artisans, mostly from the CAR, have exploited Mobilong since 1930 (first documented artisan at Mobilong).²⁶ But despite this long history of mining activity in the region, the site still rests deep in the jungle and bears minimal signs of human activity. Only after bushwhacking into the site, can one find subtle evidence of years of clandestine mining activity.²⁷

There is controversy over the time and manner of the discovery of the diamond potential at Mobilong. In 2007, a joint venture company between Cameroon and South Korea, C&K Mining Inc (Cameroon and Korea Mining Inc.) received an exploration permit from the

²⁴ Interview, Paul Ntep Gweth, Yaoundé, 22/10/09.

²⁵ Observation, Mobilong, 24/11/09.

²⁶ Ressources Naturelles, p181.

²⁷ Observation, Mobilong, 24/11/09.

Cameroonian government. However, Cameroonians and Central Africans had been mining the land since the early 20th century. According to the government and C&K, the true potential of the site was found by the Korean Company, C&C mining, in an expedition led by Professor Kim Won-sa.²⁸ However, it is common knowledge that Cameroon was well-aware of the diamond deposits before awarding the exploration permit to C&K. They may not have been aware of the quantity that C&K claims is beneath the soil, but the presence of diamonds in Mobilong has been known for a long time. The last, most thorough, documented expedition to the site was made by Paul Ntep Gweth, in 1993. At this time, there were 26 small mines in the Mobilong territory. As of 1993, there were 308 artisans at Mobilong; 10% of which were Cameroonians, working 17 mines. During this period, the artisans were producing nearly 4000 carats per month, a very large quantity for artisanal mining.²⁹ Today, Mr. Ntep Gweth, formerly an employee of the Ministry of Mines, Industry and Technological Development is the coordinator of CAPAM. CAPAM functions as a para-statal organization that assists the government with mining activities. If there had been transparency of his research, and if Cameroon had done their own geological estimates, perhaps they would not have the same lopsided deal with C&K: Cameroon owns only 20% of the shares of the company, Korea owns 80%.³⁰ No transparency, lack of communication and the familiar stink of corruption permeate the prelude to the situation at Mobilong today.

C&K's current exploration focuses around the production of diamonds from conglomerate, a layer of stone above the bedrock and below a variety of streams that have carved

²⁸ Studer, Elisabeth. Cameroun: Découverte du Plus Grand Gisement Mondial de Diamant ? CAMER Group. 29/5/09.

²⁹ Ibid, p187-188.

³⁰ Mbodiam, Brice. Cameroun: Le Diamant n'est pas encore Exploité au Cameroun. CAMER Group. 28/5/09. & Tonjé, Bakang. Diamond Exploitation at Mobilong. TAMTAM Communication Inc. 16/9/09.

paths through a layer of sandstone.³¹ For an industrial exploitation, they have to dig about 100 meters into the ground to reach conglomerate. C&K states that they will do this by using mechanized tools and not explosives.³² The use of any explosive in Cameroon is regulated by the government and requires many difficult permissions. Although, to date, C&K has already used dynamite a single time to break through to the conglomerate at the main exploration site in Mobilong. The exploration stage has only dug to a depth of 16-17 meters.³³ Because of the climate and the geographical formation of the region, all of the mining is done through saturated ground, meaning that all of the mines are water pits. The conglomerate is then brought to machines that separate the heavier masses, diamonds and other denser stones, from the conglomerate.³⁴ (Appendix A) On the artisanal level, they dig to only a level of between 1-3 meters with simple tools: shovels, hoes, mining supports and occasionally water pumps.³⁵ The artisans dig their holes in straight lines that follow, approximately, the underground rivers and fault lines where the diamonds are found. However, their methods are not practical and more based on tradition.³⁶ There is also a certain level of spirituality associated with artisanal mining in Mobilong. For instance, the first diamond that is found at the opening of a new mine is sold to make a sacrifice, usually using an animal. This is an important step to please the locals and ancestors. This has begun to die away with the arrival of C&K, and with industrial exploitation the spirituality of mining would completely disappear.³⁷ But at the moment, the sites have all been stopped as they await the Kimberly process approval. Additionally, C&K is forbidding

³¹ Interview, Paul Ntep Gweth, Yaoundé, 22/10/09; Interview, Confidential, Yaoundé, 10/11/09

³² Interview, C&K, Youkadouma, 25/11/09

³³ Interview, Confidential, Mboy II, 23/11/09.

³⁴ Interview, Confidential, Youkadouma, 26/11/09.

³⁵ Interview, Confidential (Artisan Miner 1), Mboy II, 23/11/09.

³⁶ Interview, Confidential, Youkadouma, 26/11/09.

³⁷ Interview, Confidential (Artisan Miner 2), Mboy II, 23/11/09.; Interview, Confidential, Youkadouma, 26/11/09.

artisanal mining while they await their exploitation permit. If these situations were communicated to the governing bodies, the Ministry of Mines and others, than the legal artisans would be allowed to recommence their work. But because of no communication and the secretive nature of C&K, all parties at Mobilong must wait; a time they could use to plan for the side effects of exploitation on the locals.

The Local Populations

There are two ethnic groups in the localities around Mobilong, the Bantu and the Baka, also known as pygmies. Together they form a population of approximately 2600 inhabitants between Mboy I, Mboy II and the Baka encampments (according to 2002 statistics).³⁸ For solely the village of Mboy II, there were 1672 people as of 2002 (including Baka). However, the chief of Mboy II cites that today his village is composed of 1862 inhabitants, not including the Baka.³⁹ The villages are basic: none have electricity or telephone service. The houses are traditional, built of mud and wood with thatched roofs. Occasionally there are tin roofs, plaster or concrete buildings. The Baka residences are even more basic: using dead wood from the forest, palm fronds and other natural materials. The roads throughout the region are dirt and of very bad condition. Mboy II, the final village before the site, is a kilometer and a half from the border with the Central African Republic.⁴⁰ The population here has endured years of timber companies passing through, but for them, the mining companies and the associated actors are a new phenomenon. They know patchy information about the mining activities, but are generally uneducated to the issues and have no communication with C&K. As C&K continues to employ

³⁸ Amougou, Victor, Onana Evenga, Etoa Pieere Gérard. Developpement Local Participatif : Donnees Socio Economiques de Base en vue de l'Amelioration du Plan de Developpement Communal pour la Commune Rurale de Youkadouma. CEFAID, Youkadouma : 16, Decembre 2002. p4.

³⁹ Interview, Chief Mboy II, Mboy II, 21/11/09.

⁴⁰ Interview, Commissioner of Police, Mboy II, 22/11/09.

some of the population, they are beginning to comprehend, through secondhand information, the wealth and potential for their community. But, without proper transparency and progressive efforts by the government and private entities to educate the population, the village of Mboy II will remain ignorant of the true activities at Mobilong. The village is completely cut off from the rest of the country and the potential for a socioeconomic impact in the Mboy region is minimal at this time.

The Baka, the original natives of the region, live separately from the Bantu and closest to the site. They live purely off of the fruits of the jungle: hunting, fishing and foraging. With recent attempts by NGOs to educate them on methods of farming and husbandry, the population has begun to grow corn, yams and other vegetables.⁴¹ Since the introduction of timber companies to the region, they have felt their access to their traditional forest shrinking. And although the WWF and Ministry of Forestry and Environment's program to zone the entire South-East region has brought order to the anarchical system of forest law, the Baka's original ability to freely roam the forest in search of food has evaporated.⁴² The Baka have a muddled perception of the mining occurring around them. For the large part, they are uneducated and ignored by the operating government and private bodies. Thus, they see C&K's operations as part of CAPAM, their first encounter with local mining authorities. Even the Koreans, who they identify as outsiders, are a part of CAPAM to the Baka. CAPAM is a mysterious organization they only know as in charge of mining. When CAPAM paid a mandatory visit to the Baka chief, they were distributed hats, but their requests for a school were ignored. At this time, the Baka claim that the mining activities are not directly affecting their jungle lifestyles. But after being informed of the economic and environmental impacts that result from diamond exploitation, they started to

⁴¹ Baka Reunion, Mobilong, 22/11/09.

⁴² Interview, WWF, Youkadouma, 19/11/09.

understand the results that exploitation could have on their lifestyle.⁴³ And with or without their permission, if the exploitation permit is issued, they will understand very well the impact of mining on their routines.

In this complicated equation of lack of transparency, vagueness on the rights of local populations to their land and feasibility of their demands, the Baka have been completely ignored. Not only could they not differentiate between a foreign private corporation and a Cameroonian administrative body, but they were too frightened to venture into their forefathers' hunting territory to see their natural environment being massacred.⁴⁴ The Baka's consider approaches to gain simple necessities and continue to live their traditions; they seek methods of maintaining their food supply, educating their youth, keeping healthy and staying away from trouble. The foreigners and the government either completely ignore them or stop them to arrest them for killing and eating animals they have been eating for centuries. The mining companies, like the timber companies before them, have no motivation to stop and explain their work. Even in Yaoundé, the mining administrators show a pure negligence for the rights and education of the indigenous people. When posed the question of potential problems with effects of mining on the Baka, a high-level administrator in the mining sector responded, "There is no problem. People want to create problems. People want to shout and do not give any help to those pygmies, they just shout. There is no problem. They [The Baka] want development, they want like everyone else. Bring development, don't talk, don't talk too much. There is no problem."⁴⁵ The Baka, the oldest inhabitants of the jungle, now risk having their land transformed into an industrial desert. Communication has bypassed them without someone to reinforce their rights.

⁴³ Baka Reunion, Mobilong, 22/11/09.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Interview, Confidential, Yaoundé, 22/10/09.

The Bantu live in villages throughout the south-east region, but the group of them that are most affected by mining activities are those that live in the villages stretching from Mang to Mboy II. At this time, the Bantu villages have identified a series of needs that could be realized with the influx of investment in the diamond exploitation. Depending on the group to which the question is posed, the needs identified are: the paving or amelioration of the condition of roads, improvement of health care facilities, of schools, the foundation of electricity and methods of communication (telephone service), agricultural and husbandry education and potable water.⁴⁶ Opinions differ across the village on the impact that CAPAM has already made, but the villages' common opinion of C&K is that they are secretive and have no interest in the villages. According to the chief of Mboy II, C&K is currently employing 23 from the village, but with the halting of the CAPAM's activities there is mass unemployment in the village. They have also had problems in the past because of the border with the Central African Republic. They have seen traffickers and other illegal immigrants come and steal their jobs and possessions. The entire process of mining for the villagers suggests secrecy, even for those who work for C&K; there are mysterious people that come and go, but there is no communication to the villagers.⁴⁷ The only document they have to date on the mining in their region is C&K's "Etude d'Impact Environnementale." This document explains the potential impact on the environment of exploitation at Mobilong. It also gives some estimates on their ability to employ Cameroonians.⁴⁸ However, the villagers have not had a chance to reciprocate their plans as a result of having their "backyard" disfigured. The villagers are organized and have a real interest in the future of their area. But with the continuous secrecy of C&K, the ambivalence of the government and their isolated situation they have few options except to sit and await exploitation. The villager's

⁴⁶ Reunion 1, Reunion 2, Reunion 3, 22/11/09.

⁴⁷ Reunion Mboy II, Mboy II, 22/11/09.

⁴⁸ Etude d'Impact Environnementale, C&K Mining Inc, 2007.

situation is bleak as it was 20 years ago with the arrival of the timber companies. In their own words, “Nous sommes abandonnés à nous-mêmes.” [We are abandoned to ourselves].⁴⁹

Women, like the Baka, are another group that is ignored in the outcomes of these industrial industries. However, as fellow farmers, foragers, trappers and fishermen, the impact on their forest, on their husbands and on themselves will also reverberate with the exploitation of the diamond site. In the villages surrounding Mobilong, only once has a woman from the village ever been invited to a meeting concerning mines. However, their organization and potential as a development group may be the most organized in the vicinity. They have structured bodies with representatives, a president, and they meet together often. They have identified the most important and feasible development opportunities for the women of their villages: (in order of importance) energy (electricity, communication), agricultural education and materials, a daycare school, potable water and improvement of roads. However, their education on the actual work underway at this time is somewhere between the village men and the Baka. They understand the parties involved, but because of their separation from the process (very few women have ever been involved in artisanal mining activities) they are unsure of what is happening.⁵⁰ They understand the possible effects, that with development, their husbands may be seduced by the arrival of wealthier women and more modern opportunities.⁵¹ But currently, they associate the mining activities with mystical properties and misinformed notions of what these “Koreans” are actually doing. For instance, they are under the impression that trucks of conglomerate that have been leaving the site to go back to Youkadouma and Bertoua and are full of diamonds. In reality, there is nothing except stone for testing in these trucks. Subsequently there are fears that soon the

⁴⁹ Reunion Mboy II, Mboy II, 22/11/09.

⁵⁰ Reunion, Women of Mboy II. 22/11/09.

⁵¹ Informal Interview, Amougou, Victor. Mboy II, 22/11/09.

site will be void of all its precious gems. They are also under the impression that mining activities have led to climate change; it is colder as a result of the mining at Mobilong.⁵² Women are an excellent example of another group completely ignored in the mining sector's expansion; a group that has suffered from lack of education in the wake of zero transparency.

The artisanal miners are a separate subset within the village community and also those who live closest to the actual site. They are the impetus for all industrial mining operations/explorations in Cameroon. With underdevelopment in the sector throughout the history of the country, artisanal miners have been the trail of bread crumbs for the government and foreign mining companies to follow. They have been at Mobilong for nearly 80 years.⁵³ Artisans do not have a quantitative prediction of the future of the site: an idea on the absolute mass of diamonds beneath their feet. For them, the ground is rich and if you respect God and follow the methods to respect the mine, you will find diamonds and live prosperously.⁵⁴ For artisanal miners, there is no geological theory behind their success in finding diamonds; although they are aware of the geological lines on which diamonds are found.⁵⁵ They are, for the large part, a migrant group that travels to wherever there is the possibility to mine and make money. The artisans are also a group associated with miscreant behavior: among their population there is rampant alcoholism, drug abuse and sexually transmitted diseases. They bring quick money and consumption habits with them wherever they go. At this time, there are very few of them still at Mobilong because of the current freezes in mining, but at their peak there have been as many as 300 around the region.⁵⁶ Many of this population also come from the Central African Republic;

⁵² Reunion, Women of Mboy II, 22/11/09.

⁵³ Resources Naturelles du Cameroun. P184.

⁵⁴ Interview, Confidential (Artisan Miner 1), Mboy II, 23/11/09.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Interview, Confidential, Mboy II, 22/11/09.

illegal workers that also bring guns and violent habits from the diamond mines of their own country.⁵⁷ The artisans are a population that the locals will be glad to see disappear, but if they are not managed properly by the government, they could pose a serious threat to the security of the diamond project. Without proper communication, Cameroon could see its diamond industry self-destruct at the hands of these degenerates.

The medical community is starting to see the issue of mining as a serious threat to the general health of populations. At the hospital in Youkadouma, they have been witnessing the injuries and diseases associated with both the forestry and mining sectors for years. To combat this problem, they have begun to make progressive steps. Doctors in Youkadouma have begun speaking to delegates at the Ministry of Mines and doctors at the CNPS (National Insurance Plan). The doctors have a few primary concerns: primarily, they have yet to receive a mining employee for treatment of injury, despite knowledge of accidents occurring at the sites.⁵⁸ There is also concern over the actual safety methods used at the site: not all workers are issued proper safety equipment beyond boots (lack of helmets, jackets, etc).⁵⁹ There is also a common perception in the hospitals of the mining companies as being secretive and dishonest. The hospitals have experience with the forestry companies and have even started a tab with their companies in Doula. As an example, in 2008, there were 82 accidents of hernia and trauma in forestry or (clandestine) mining injuries. They are also worried about the issue of sexually transmitted diseases. The Eastern province, especially the artisanal mining community and the forestry workers, have astronomical sexually transmitted disease levels: An issue that comes with their lifestyles and intermittent income. Additionally, the government does not provide the

⁵⁷ Interview, Commissioner of Police, Mboy II, 22/11/09.

⁵⁸ Interview, Dr. Njeng, Joseph. Youkadouma. 26/11/09.

⁵⁹ Interview, Confidential, Mboy II, 23/11/09.

hospital with adequate transport to address injuries that occur at the site, 50 kilometers away from Youkadouma.⁶⁰ There are steps being made to combat these problems. GTZ, a German-Cameroon socioeconomic partner of the WWF, is currently working on a program to educate and combat sexually transmitted diseases and SIDA within forestry company employees; a program that, if exploitation commences, will move into the mining sector.⁶¹ But as usual, the primary bodies responsible for problems with the mining sector, government bodies and C&K, have ignored the problem under the veil of confidentiality and lack of communication.

The question that plagues each of these group's demands for their needs is the feasibility of their requests. Mboy II, for instance, has a population of 1862, a sizable village, but in comparison to Youkadouma, not necessarily warranting a hospital.⁶² As companies, governments and other administrative parties are well aware, people will always be asking for things: this is a sentiment echoed at CAPAM, Ministry of Mines, Ministry of Finances, C&K and Geovic (among others). Realistically, these populations must educate themselves to their rights so that they can appropriately ask for what they are owed under Cameroonian law. Additionally, the groups can look to historical examples, like Geovic or other diamond industries, in similar situations and see that there will be development in any case. The answers to the bulk of their problems are to bypass the barriers of secrecy, lack of transparency and be progressive with their communication to the government and to other advocating bodies.

⁶⁰ Interview, Dr. Njeng, Joseph. Youkadouma. 26/11/09.

⁶¹ Promotional Item, GTZ, Bureau de Coordination. Bastos Yaounde. Confirmed with interview. 27/11/09.

⁶² Interview, Chief Mboy II, Mboy II, 21/11/09.

Major Actors in Cameroon Diamond Mining

The process of mining in Cameroon, as aforementioned, is still realizing its structures, administrations and regulations. Subsequently, there is much overlap in the government bodies that deal with mining activities. This often poses a conflict and a hurdle to expedited, law-abiding procedures in the mining sector. There are also power struggles and hostilities over domains among ministries. Many of these problems could be resolved if the laws surrounding mining were more clearly defined. At the moment, the most important document in the governance of mining activities is the Mining Code, republished the 16th of April, 2001.⁶³ All members of the community, government officials alike, admit that this is a document that needs revision and clarification.⁶⁴ Until that time, the actors working around the exploitation of diamonds will continue to butt heads over approaches to sustainable methods of developing this new sector of Cameroon's economy.

Government bodies working on the administration of mining in Cameroon, like most sectors of Cameroon's economy are not sufficiently specialized, both in theory and in principal. The Ministry of Mines and Technology is a recently formed body of the Cameroonian government. A subset of the Ministry of Industry, Mines and Technological Development, the ministry's mining department has only come to relevance in the last 8 years. But, as exploration permits are being given out to all ten regions of the country, it has become necessary to expand the ministry to address solely mining activity. The Ministry of Mines' primary responsibility, with respect to diamond mining, is to facilitate conversation between the different parties involved. In this case: C&K, CAPAM, the artisanal miners and the local community.⁶⁵ The

⁶³ Mining Code, Law of 16th April, 2001. The National Assembly deliberated and adopted.

⁶⁴ Interviews, Confidential.

⁶⁵ Interview, Ministry of Mines, Yaoundé, 21/10/09.

Ministry of Mines “regulates and uses their expertise to aid the exploration activities of C&K.”⁶⁶ Their job also entails dealing with potential problems/difficulties between the population and the companies. Technically, delegates of the Ministry of Mines can surprise audit the activities at Mobilong at any time.⁶⁷ However, the ministry has rarely used this tactic. Their approach to issues of transparency with the mining companies is theoretically warped: transparency has to be happening because it is in the best interest of the company to produce results or their activities would be paralyzed. “They must be honest in order to obtain an exploitation permit.”⁶⁸ By relying on the almighty power of the government to cease any activity, the Ministry of Mines essentially is re-delegating its responsibilities of monitoring back up the hierarchy.

The Ministry of Mines also distributes artisanal mining cards to legalize their mining activities. The card, which can be purchased at any Ministry of Mines delegation, costs 7000 CFA and authorizes mining activities as registered with the state.⁶⁹ At this time, the ministry is operating with knowledge that all of the artisanal miners in the Mobilong region are working illegally. By turning a blind eye, the Ministry of Mines allows the production to continue with aspirations of furthering the industry. Instead, they have delegated their last job, the collection of taxes, to a different semi-governmental body, CAPAM, who buys the products from the artisans and then resells them, paying taxes at that point.⁷⁰

To throw more disorder into the Ministry of Mines’ indifference, there are also four other ministries that find themselves involved in similar activity: MINFOF (Forestry and Fauna), MINEP (Environmental Protection), MINAS (Social Affairs) and MINFI (Finance). Other

⁶⁶ Interview, Ministry of Mines, Youkadouma, 25/11/09.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid

⁶⁹ Ibid .

⁷⁰ Ibid.

ministries have also found ways to exert their rights to authority over the situation, but these five actors are the primary stakeholders in the results of mining activities.

The Ministry of Environmental Protection (MINEP) deals with the environmental impacts of the possible exploitation. MINEP also pays attention to the environmental impacts that exploration has already made. Each year they conduct at least two investigations in the field followed by evaluation publications (whether this deals specifically with the mining sector, the representatives would not clarify). They are respecting C&K's publication of an environmental impact assessment as the current state of affairs at Mobilong; they do not feel it necessary to do autonomous studies. MINEP has accepted the eventual degradation of the local environment as a result of mining activities, however, they are not adequately preparing for the future rehabilitation of the program. They have no specific plans to offer, just understanding that when exploitation commences they will need to rehabilitate and regenerate the environment afterwards. It is a difficult dynamic between conservation and development. The ministry is aware of the problems, but unsure how to deal with them and crippled by a lack of communication and secrecy at the top levels of their government and of C&K.⁷¹

The Ministry of Forestry and Fauna (MINFOF) has the most tenuous relationship with the other mining actors as a result of overlaps in the zoning of mining exploration permits and forestry concessions. It is MINFOF's role to monitor the forestry companies, protect the region's biodiversity and facilitate conversation with those who might affect the forest or animals. With the activity at Mobilong MINFOF is trying to organize a collaboration/conversation between C&K and CFC, the forestry company who exploits the wood in the Mobilong zone. At this time,

⁷¹ Interview, Ministry of Environmental Protection, Youkadouma, 25/11/09.

MINFOF is quick to admit that relations are “cold.”⁷² The conversation has revolved only around the rehabilitation process associated with both industries and the effect on the flora and fauna. MINFOF’s primary concern with C&K is secrecy and a lack of stated priorities. The delegate of MINFOF at Youkadouma, for instance, was not aware of the processes that are involved in industrial exploitation of a diamond mine. The mining industry lacks credibility with these ministries in comparison to the forestry industry, which MINFOF, MINEP and other government bodies have been dealing with for 20 years. The forestry companies have generated long-term plans of management: a 20-year plan of zoning, rehabilitation and social reforms. With the mining companies the forestry companies are fretting over the vagueness of the laws and the activities of the mining community. MINFOF is also trying to deal with issues of poaching, a problem that had occurred in the past with forestry workers, but after more than 20 years of regulations and education, has ceased to continue as a threat. The same situation does not exist with miners. In the past, artisan diamond miners have been well-known and punished accordingly for their bushmeat consumption. Today, MINFOF is watching the same phenomenon with all mining companies. Isolated in the bush, they use bushmeat as their sole source of protein. In general, there are historically similar statements made about the population attracted by mining activities as was once said with the timber companies: it is a group of miscreants involved in activities that are detrimental to local population and the biodiversity of the region.⁷³

The Ministry of Finances and Ministry of Social Affairs fill just two roles that overlap with the mining sector: collection of taxes and distribution of funds and the protection of local minorities (the Baka). However, within that framework there is much room for conflict and

⁷² Interview, MINFOF Delegate, Youkadouma, 26/11/09.

⁷³ Ibid.

corruption. The Ministry of Social Affairs deals with the environmental impact on the Baka, a project that is supposed to spread across other ministries. Together with the Ministry of Mines and C&K, they are working on a project to guarantee the protection of Baka lands. This could come in the form of displacement reparations: land or fiduciary. MINAS's goals seem to contradict the views of the mining companies and other ministries who have no intention of repaying the Bakas as a minority, but wish instead to ignore them or simply treat them as normal citizens. However, they have experienced problems working with Baka administration, NGOs and other ministries: MINEP and WWF. Only one month has passed since the commencement of this project (before they had not received the authorization and funds), but the ministry is looking into a way to manage the impact on the minority and compensate them.⁷⁴ However, MINEP's involvement in the process is also contradictory to MINAS because of their approach to the rights and privileges of the Baka minority. For instance, if the Baka kill an endangered animal, they will be prosecuted under the same laws as the rest of the population. This would make sense, except that under the zoning requirements and destruction of animal habitats in forestry and mining sectors, the animals are moving back into Baka sectors and the Baka do not have the proper education or respect for the laws to know not to kill and eat endangered species.⁷⁵

The Ministry of Finances role in the equation is merely to guarantee the collection of taxes and distribution of funds. However, they have made very few attempts to educate themselves on the issue and are subsequently going to be very far behind when the exploitation eventually commences.⁷⁶ They are the most uneducated, involved administrative body. When

⁷⁴ Interview, MINAS, Youkadouma, 26/11/09.

⁷⁵ Interview, Ministry of Environmental Protection, Youkadouma, 25/11/09.

⁷⁶ Interview, MINFI, Yaoundé, 9/11/09.

they receive taxes, they are glad, but are making no progressive attempts to collect them on their own initiative.

CAPAM (Cadre d'Appui et de Promotion de l'Artisanat Minier [and Promotion of the Artisan Miner]) was created by the Prime Minister on July 25th, 2003 to serve as an “operational unit of facilitation, support, promotion and expertise on matters concerning artisan mining”⁷⁷ The organization is a para-statally structured—it operates as a private company on behalf of the government. Having moved away from its original role as a supporter, educator and administrator of artisanal mining, CAPAM operates today in both the large-scale and small-scale mining processes. They founded the joint-venture corporation with C&C Mining to create C & K Mining Inc.⁷⁸ There have been many critiques of CAPAM since their inception. Originally, their purposes were to identify artisanal mining sites, organize the artisanal miners into groups, distribute tools and technical assistance to these groups and to facilitate conversation with NGOs, etc to promote the lifestyles of the artisan community.⁷⁹ Today, they continue their operations in artisanal mining, but have also begun to assist other companies looking into large-scale production, such as at Mobilong. Before the arrival of CAPAM at Mobilong, there were groups of South-Africans that would give materials and food to artisans and the buy diamonds at an extorted price. With the arrival of CAPAM, the artisans were organized into GICAMINES, organizations of fifty artisans. Within the GICAMINE, they work together, share what they find and it gives an “ambiance” to a work that had been solitary and lonely.⁸⁰ CAPAM brings order to the artisanal diamond mining community: they implement taxes by buying diamonds and

⁷⁷ Promotional Material, CAPAM, Ministry of Industry, Mine and Technological Development. P11. Siege de l'EX-MINMEE: BP 15 620 Yaoundé.

⁷⁸ Interview, Paul Ntep Gweth, Yaoundé, 22/10/09.

⁷⁹ Critique CAPAM. Unpublished. Confidential.

⁸⁰ Interview, Confidential (Artisan Miner 1), Mboy II, 23/11/09.

recording the path of diamonds, from the mine to the buyer. However, CAPAM's motivations are mixed and despite their goals, they have not been able to truly assist in the transition to industrial work at Mobilong.⁸¹ Today, they are nearly nonexistent at Mobilong with the discontinuation of mining activities because of the Kimberly process.

Since 2002, the number of private, for the large part, foreign, mining companies in Cameroon has multiplied by nearly 40.⁸² Although there is still only one company operating as an industrial exploiter, Geovic, the Ministry of Mines has granted over 80 exploration permits to other companies.⁸³ C&K mining is a joint-venture company between Korea and Cameroon to identify and exploit diamonds. C&K is currently operating in two places in Cameroon: by Garoua Boulai, exploiting gold, and in Mobilong, exploring diamonds. C&K claims to currently be employing 24 workers from Mboy II, 9 of who are temporary workers. Their jobs include daily workers, guides and security guards. None of these workers are women. Their goal is to be awarded the exploitation permit by the end of the year. They are also intending to work with the forestry companies and the forest administrations on a "platform of understanding" to share information, jointly access the land and rehabilitate it together.⁸⁴ This would work because under industrial exploitation, the forest around the site would need to be razed before excavation began. However, C&K's goals do not seem to have been actually shared with the forestry companies; none of the ministries or the CDC is aware of this apparent "platform of understanding." C&K's secrecy is a problem that will have to be resolved in order for Cameroon to reach its potential in the diamond industry.

⁸¹ Interview, Confidential, Youkadouma, 26/11/09.

⁸² Ibid

⁸³ Interview, Ministry of Mines, Ngaoundere, 2/11/09.

⁸⁴ Interview, C&K, Youkadouma, 25/11/09.

Comparisons to Other Exploitative Industries in Cameroon

There have been several critiques of Cameroon's past exploitation of its natural resources. From the exploitation by timber companies in the late 1980s and 1990s to the Chad-Cameroon pipeline, the government has approved projects that have been detrimental to the environment and local peoples. These mismanagements have made Cameroon cautious about its next exploitative projects. In partnership with the World Bank and the IMF, Cameroon is working more gradually on its infrastructure. But despite progressive, well-intentioned efforts by outside actors, Cameroon's government has yet to learn from its historical mistakes and continues to be crippled by bad governance.

The mining sector is the next great market for Cameroonian export. But there are eerie similarities in size, situation and population present between a possible expansive diamond mine at Mobilong and the problems faced with the pipeline and timber industry. First, the industry is exploitative and despite even the most stringent precautions, large scale production of any mine results in environmental destruction. This was a similar problem faced with cutting a path for the pipeline through the heart of Cameroon and with the timber industry as they razed the forests of the East. Most of the forest concessions that still occur today for the timber companies overlap with the prospective jackpots for the diamond industry.⁸⁵ The social problems are also similar: in both the pipeline and timber projects, the most negatively affected group of people is the indigenous people, or pygmies. The site at Mobilong in the south-east is a pygmy region. With the pipeline, a great deal of the pygmies' natural habitat was destroyed and they were displaced from their forest homes, where they had resided as the earliest indigenous peoples of

⁸⁵ Interview, WWF, Youkadouma, 19/11/09.

Cameroon.⁸⁶ The timber industry was also barely administered for much of its early years of exploitation and the logging companies cut down a large part of the rainforest in the protected Congo Basin. Today, the Baka have been restricted by zoning and are no longer allowed to wander freely into their former hunting grounds—the logging and mining companies domains.⁸⁷

One can compare the concessions made to the logging companies in the late 1980s to those that are being made to the mining companies in the form of exploration permits today. In fact, the similarities are, in some cases, repetitions because the mining concessions are being administered in the same spots as those logging permits. This tactless approach to natural resource exploitation by the government further damages the conditions of wildlife and important environmental corridors.⁸⁸ (See Appendix B) It is disheartening to see a repetition of previous mistakes under similar circumstances and after almost two decades of environmental and social recoil and subsequent lawsuits from outside pressures. If C&K gets its wish and completes their exploitation in partnership with the forestry companies and administration, the industries would become nearly inseparable in the Mobilong context. As an essential element of the exploitation process, the above ground foliage must be cleared to excavate down to the lower levels. Consequently, C&K's shadow partnership between timber companies and the forestry administration to jointly exploit the area would be best for the two exploitative industries. The timber companies would log and clear the above ground and C&K would then proceed to excavate up to 100 meters.⁸⁹ While it is heartening to see these two exploitative companies work together and not be in conflict, this plan reveals the absolute desert that will be formed at the completion of exploitation.

⁸⁶ Ndi Omgbwa, Felix Devalois. Lecture-Pygmies. Kribi: 19/10/09.

⁸⁷ Baka Reunion, Mobilong, 22/11/09.

⁸⁸ Interview, WWF-Scientist, Youkadouma, 19/11/09.

⁸⁹ Interview, C&K, Youkadouma, 25/11/09.

Laws and Regulations

With similar circumstances already set, abuse of the environment and local peoples look probable because of the current laws. The contemporary nature of governed mining in Cameroon—mining law can be found in the Mining Code and government decrees, regulations and a number of laws—allows for much flexibility on the behalf of the governing bodies, flexibility that can make mining law imprecise. Besides the Mining Code, half of the governmental statements deal with tax collection, some deal with petroleum companies specifically and the final laws deal with quarry management and the use of explosives.⁹⁰ With barely any guidelines in place, there is a risk of an environmental catastrophe, a complete social disregard and the economic bypass of Cameroon for a foreign company.

Under the mining code, the only benefits to the local population are the fees that mining companies pay to the government during production.⁹¹ And despite the Mining Code's clear statement that the state is the sole proprietor of all diamonds in Cameroon, the government has negotiated for only 20% of the shares within C&K.⁹² It seems that the vague laws that Cameroon created to regulate the mining industry have no legal value; in contrast, they work perfectly for corruption, centralization of funds and maltreatment of the local populations.

The primary law problem that is faced on the social front is the possibility that the local population and indigenous people could see their land and resources disappear, a dramatic change in their lifestyle. /there are many contradictions in the rights of the indigenous peoples in Cameroon against those laws that have been given out to exploit the environment's natural

⁹⁰ Bendi, M. *Mining in Cameroon Overview*. Mbendi. <http://www.w3c.org/TR/1999/REC-html401-19991224/loose.dtd> Last Modified: November 15, 2009.

⁹¹ Halleson, Durrel. *Logging and Mining in Cameroon: Challenges for Environmental Protection and Sustainable Development*. CED. p4.

⁹² Mining Code, Law of 16th April, 2001. Article 6.

resources. In a declaration presented by the United Nations and signed by Paul Biya on the “Rights of the Indigenous Peoples,” the current situation the Baka face seems to be contradictory to state intentions. It is important to emphasize that this document is not law, but is a declaration. The 18th Article declares that indigenous people have the right to participate in questions of their rights by means of a representative.⁹³ And in Article 26 it is proposed the indigenous peoples have the right to land, territory and resources which they have traditionally possessed and resided in.⁹⁴ Finally, the 29th Article declares that indigenous peoples have the right to preservation and protection of their environment as it is used for production of resources.⁹⁵ At this point, the Baka around Mobilong have had none of these rights met. They are not invited to C&K meetings to discuss their involvement and rights in regards to the mining activities occurring directly in their territory. The land they have been living in for longer than any other Cameroonian inhabitant has been rezoned and limited so that they no longer live the same, ideal lifestyle that their forefathers’ enjoyed. This is a critique primarily of the forestry industry and the zoning laws, however, with industrial exploitation, there would need to be further rezoning and the resources of the Baka’s land would be diminished greatly. The final relevant point of this declaration, concerning the protection of the environment being used for resources, is a controversial point because of the Baka’s hunting methods and the forestry and mining companies’ use of their environment for the exploitation of resources. This declaration, approved by the President of the country, simply reemphasizes the lack of communication within the government and the indifference and inability to implement law or principal.

⁹³Declaration des Nations Unies sur les Droits des Peuples Autochones. United Nations 29, June 2007. Central African Republic. p21.

⁹⁴ Ibid, p25.

⁹⁵ Ibid, p27.

Even under international law, Cameroon's rights of the local people's in their exploitative industries are neglected. In a United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity, a document which is respected as international law, Article 10 states that in the durable utilization of the elements constituting biological diversity, each party must conform to the following rules: First, to protect and encourage ritual usage of biological resources conforming to the traditional cultural practices compatible with the imperatives of their conservation and durable use. Secondly, to aid local populations to conceive and apply corrective measures in degraded zones where biological diversity has been impoverished.⁹⁶ At the current situation, should exploitation commence the Baka and local Bantu would both be victims of an abuse of their right to resources in traditional practice. The artisan miners, who have many rituals over the extraction of diamonds, would be expelled from their traditional mining site and their resources, diamonds, would be exploited without conforming to their spiritual rites. For the Baka, who consider the entire forest sacred, this law has bypassed them time and again. Diamond exploitation would completely destroy their natural habitat and force them to change their traditions of the forest. Without a review of the social rights of the local people, Cameroon will once again watch their people be abused at the mechanized hand of the exploitative industries.

Social and Economic Impact

Present

The mining activities have, at present, made little economic or social impact on the local, national and international level. Although minimal impact is understandable on the state and international level because industrial exploitation has not begun, there has been room for the

⁹⁶ Convention sur la Diversité Biologique. Montreal.

government, C&K and CAPAM to better utilize local resources. Additionally, there have been some environmental impacts creating a lifestyle change for local peoples. The company has been making great use of the fauna as nutrition for their workers, taking away from the Baka's food sources, a further detriment to the biodiversity. Positively, C&K has begun employing villagers from Mboy II at salaries, in some cases, far above their normal income. Take for example the salaries of two, separate daily workers in different months of the year, one made approximately 40,000 CFA, 1314 CFA per day after taxes. The other worker made 42,000 CFA, 1371 CFA per day, after taxes.⁹⁷ Comparatively this raises the standard of living for the undereducated local worker in the East region of Cameroon who might make between 400 and 1100 CFA per day selling produce or similar jobs.⁹⁸ Nearly half of the jobs are not permanent, but workers have found it easy to find other means of living after their time at C&K. There is a problem with the employment of illegal workers, primarily from the Central African Republic. This makes sense for the efficiency and expertise of the project; Central Africans have been exploiting diamonds for longer, both at Mobilong and in their own country. However, the current situation does not present the true problems that could occur as a result of exploitation, the eventual outcome of the fantastic resources at Mobilong.

Future

For the local population at Mboy, the Youkadouma region and those other forest-dwelling Baka (pygmies), the result of exploitation could result in large-scale inflation. For a population that for the most part lives on less than a dollar per day, and does not garner any significant income, exploitation would bring an immediate, extreme flow of cash into the local economy. Diamond employees would need to be fed, residences would need to be constructed

⁹⁷ Interview, Confidential, Mboy II, 21/11/09.

⁹⁸ Interview, MINFI, Yaoundé, 9/11/09.

and the population does not have expertise or the manpower to conform to these demands. For the large part, the locals have no interest in diamonds, but are merely hoping to receive benefits at the expense of the destruction of their natural environment. The influx of money from exploitation, if properly managed, could lead to major infrastructure developments for an area in need of—better roads, health-care facilities, schools and technological developments. Most realistically, the future for these residents could result in the employment of a large percentage of their population—as daily workers and forest guides. At present salaries, this would only raise the standard of living of the employed individuals in the villages by between 19% and 229%. This could be a large increase, depending on the employee's previous income, but after taking into account inflation, the real income would be far less striking. However, should C&K conform to the industrial diamond standards and pay their workers far more than 40,000 CFA per month, the boost to the local economy would be enormous. This impact, however, risks a series of economic side effects. Inflation and overdevelopment could destabilize the jobs of the other villagers and make the cost of living unreasonable. There is also a potential conflict between artisan miners and C&K: Currently, C&K pays no fees/compensations to artisans to work the land they have been working for decades.⁹⁹ Artisan miners are technically not entitled to any of the profits of the land, since it belongs to the state. But, the artisans may not see it that way. Additionally, the Central Africans, who have firearms that they use for security in diamond sales, could be at unease with the seizure of their working grounds.

On the national level, the long-term effects of industrial exploitation could be astronomical for Cameroon. The Kimberly process produces statistics on diamond imports/exports and production each year. As a result of these statistics, there is better

⁹⁹ Interview, Confidential (Artisan Miner 2), Mboy II, 23/11/09

transparency on the macro level and the world's diamond market has become less dodgy and more tangible. Economic progress can be quantitatively measured to allow country's to sell their product at a fair trade level. With the prediction for the size of the Cameroonian deposits at Mobilong, the possibilities are vast. If managed properly and sold at the level (depending on the quality of gemstone) of Botswana, rather than at the level of a more tumultuous country, like the DRC, the diamond mine could produce a total production of close to 70 trillion US dollars for its 736 predicted number of carats (See Appendix C). This graph illustrates the vast potential depending on management of resources and a quantitative impact that could result from diamond exploitation at Mobilong. These potentials show the vast spectrum of possible results according to countries with stable governments, corruption in the mining process and the transparency of the operation. With proper communication, regulations and transparency, Cameroon could profit nearly ten times more than if managed poorly, as with the Democratic Republic of the Congo. This data also accounts for the quality of gemstones, inflating the comparative values of countries like the CAR and Angola. However, because of the current proportions of shares held by Cameroon and Korea in the joint-venture, C&K, Cameroon's real profit from this project could be far less than if they properly negotiated the exploitation of *their* natural resources. At 20%, Cameroon will be receiving less of the net production profits than they received with projects like the pipeline. Cameroon will also collect 10% of the gross from taxes that will be "reinvested into the country." But as with past projects, there are great possibilities for this money to disappear in chunks or be inefficiently redistributed. The total impact for Cameroon is more accessible by Appendix D.

From a social perspective, the impacts on the local population have astronomical breadth. If managed purely, the area around Mobilong could be a great industrial capital, producing

mining products and timber interchangeably, while appropriately zoning the rights of the local forest peoples and protecting the fauna within their national parks. In reality, the future is dim. While proper management of the entire situation is possible, such results usually occur solely if the managing government, company and locals have great communication and experience in the field. In Cameroon, none of these criteria are met. If C&K were to gain their exploitation permit by the end of the year, as they hope, they would not be adequately prepared to manage the effects of exploitation. First, they do not have the funds to take many of the necessary precautions for the environment.¹⁰⁰ Second, although they have created an environmental impact strategy, their relationship with their default partner, the forestry company, CFC, is distant at best. There would be immediate issues over right to exploitation. On the health front, the company plans to bring in Korean health officials to start a clinic. But with no experience in treating the injuries of their workers to date, are they really qualified to administer healthcare to nearly 4000 employees? At the government level, there are few plans to control the exploiting monster that could result from giving C&K exploitation rights to 250 km² of Cameroonian soil. The petty conflicts for control and the lack of communication between ministries could lead to total disarray and a power struggle which would leave the local populations cries for assistance falling on deaf ears.

For Cameroon this would confirm the initial step of Geovic and truly commence the future of exploitative industries. A once dense forest will be razed and the forest bed will be excavated to create a crater of dirt, which during the rainy season will turn into a virtual lake. Both C&K and the forestry companies have plans to rehabilitate the excavated territory during their work.¹⁰¹ However, they seem to have overlooked this rather ominous detail; that, perhaps, with deep excavation, reforestation will not be possible come the first rain of the season.

¹⁰⁰ Interview, Confidential, Youkadouma, 26/11/09.

¹⁰¹ Interview, C&K, Youkadouma, 25/11/09.

Although an environmental aspect of the exploitation, if the jungle were to be destroyed in such a manner, the results would send shockwaves into the local economy and lifestyles of the populace.

Conclusion

It would be expected for me to conclude this paper with an accusation of the evil, foreign corporate systems, a statement of the untrustworthy government and a proclamation of the absolute, inalienable rights of the people to the fruits of their land. However, these stereotyped conclusions on exploitative industries do not universally apply. In the case of Mobilong and the advancement of the diamond site for eventual exploitation, there is a haze of secrecy over all of the operations. The foreign company, C&K has conducted their research, come to a veritable conclusion on the validity of massive diamond reserves and is now waiting on the government to grant them the permission to exploit. They could be doing more, especially with the stall in their work, to address issues in the local communities, speak to the forestry companies and make progressive steps with the government. However, as a private company, they are focusing on their primary ambition: to make money. Most distressing about C&K, however, is the secrecy with which they conduct their affairs. While confidentiality is important and respected, successful exploitative projects require transparency, patience and communication with all of the parties involved.

The local populations around Youkadouma and, more specifically, from Mboy to Mobilong, have been completely ignored in the exploration stage. Without proper representation, they seem to be forever at the whim of exploitative industries. And while their needs have been malnourished by the state and their demands of the timber companies have been ignored, they

need to realize realistically what they can gain from this mining process and take the appropriate and reasonable steps to bring attention to their plight. While this is their land, they must be organized and educated to fight for it. They need access to communication, electricity and a health clinic, improved roads, more teachers and a nursery school. But when they ask for a hospital, high levels of education for the entire village and paved roads, their demands will be whisked off an administrator's desk in a one-millionth of the time it took to get there. The Baka, in fact, are the most concerning section of the population. They are frightened of confrontation and besides the assistance of some NGOs, they have received no education on any of the processes underway. Without communication, good representation and organization, the local population will continue to suffer and not gain their true rights to the fruits of their land.

It is here where the government would usually enter to ameliorate the situation, facilitate dialogue and protect the rights of the people in their nation. Unfortunately, the government seems to be operating without proper motivation, monitoring and expertise. Issues of communication and tense relations between the different ministries and vague laws have left Cameroonian officials in all the different departments lost and always referring to the actions of their superiors. The lack of communication has resulted in the overlap in mining exploration permits and the forestry sector and the discontent of the people. Corruption is surely at the center of the unbalanced negotiations over the profits from the site at Mobilong. And because there is no transparency throughout the industry, those who would be able to call attention to problems are still piecing together the roots of the corruption and mismanagement. Without immediate overhaul of the regulations governing mining activity, Cameroonian administration over mining will continue to flounder in a sea of corruption, ambivalence and opaque communication.

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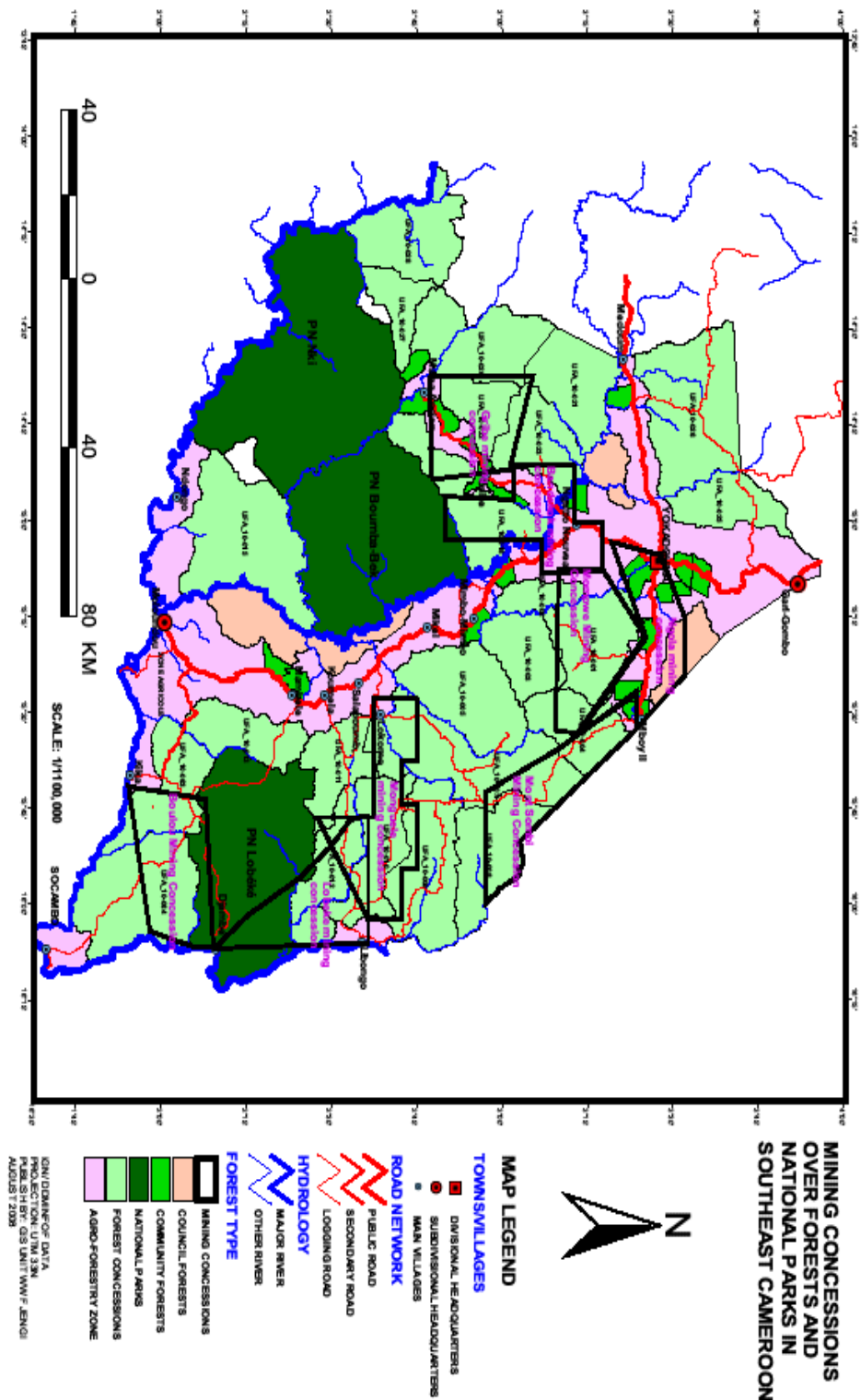
Appendix A

Separating Machinery

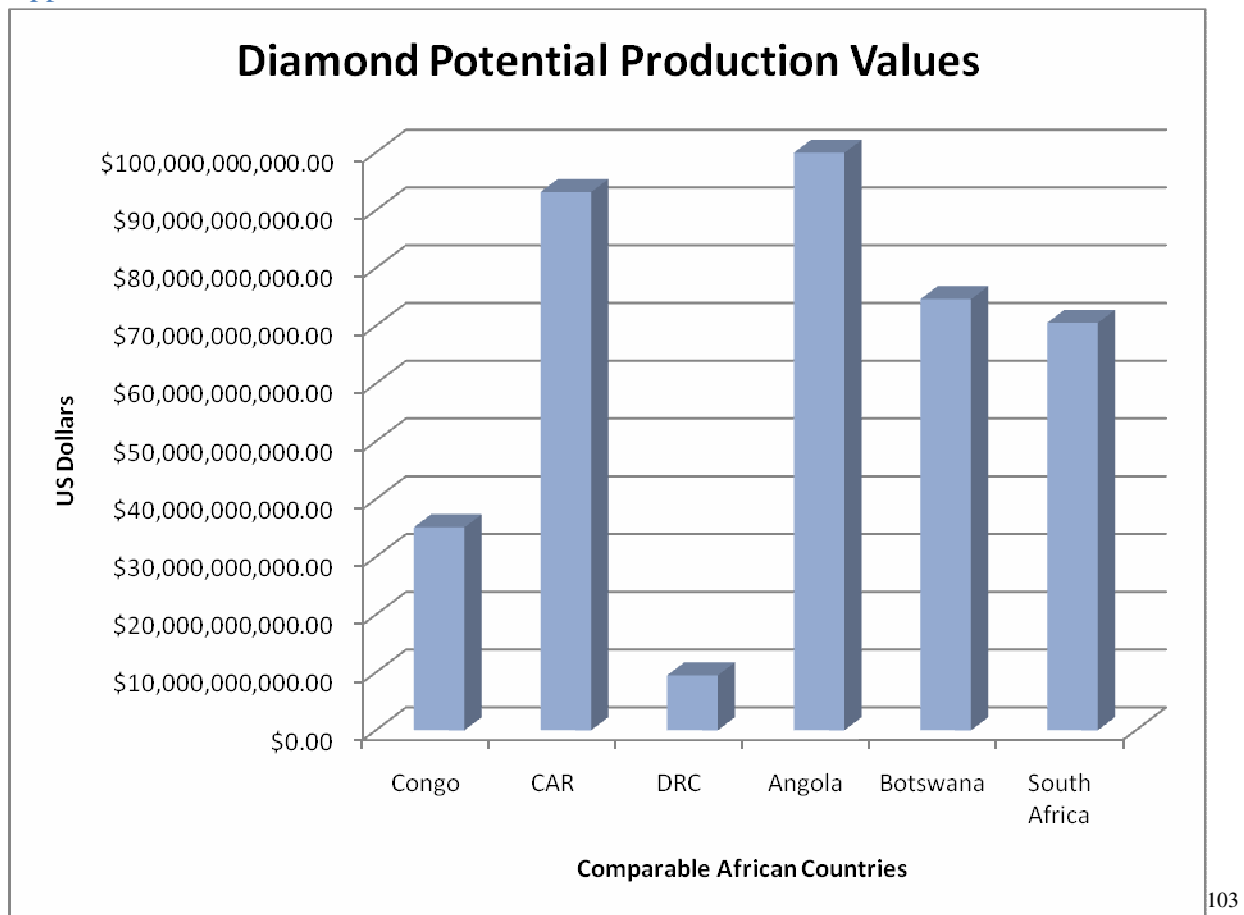


Pit A



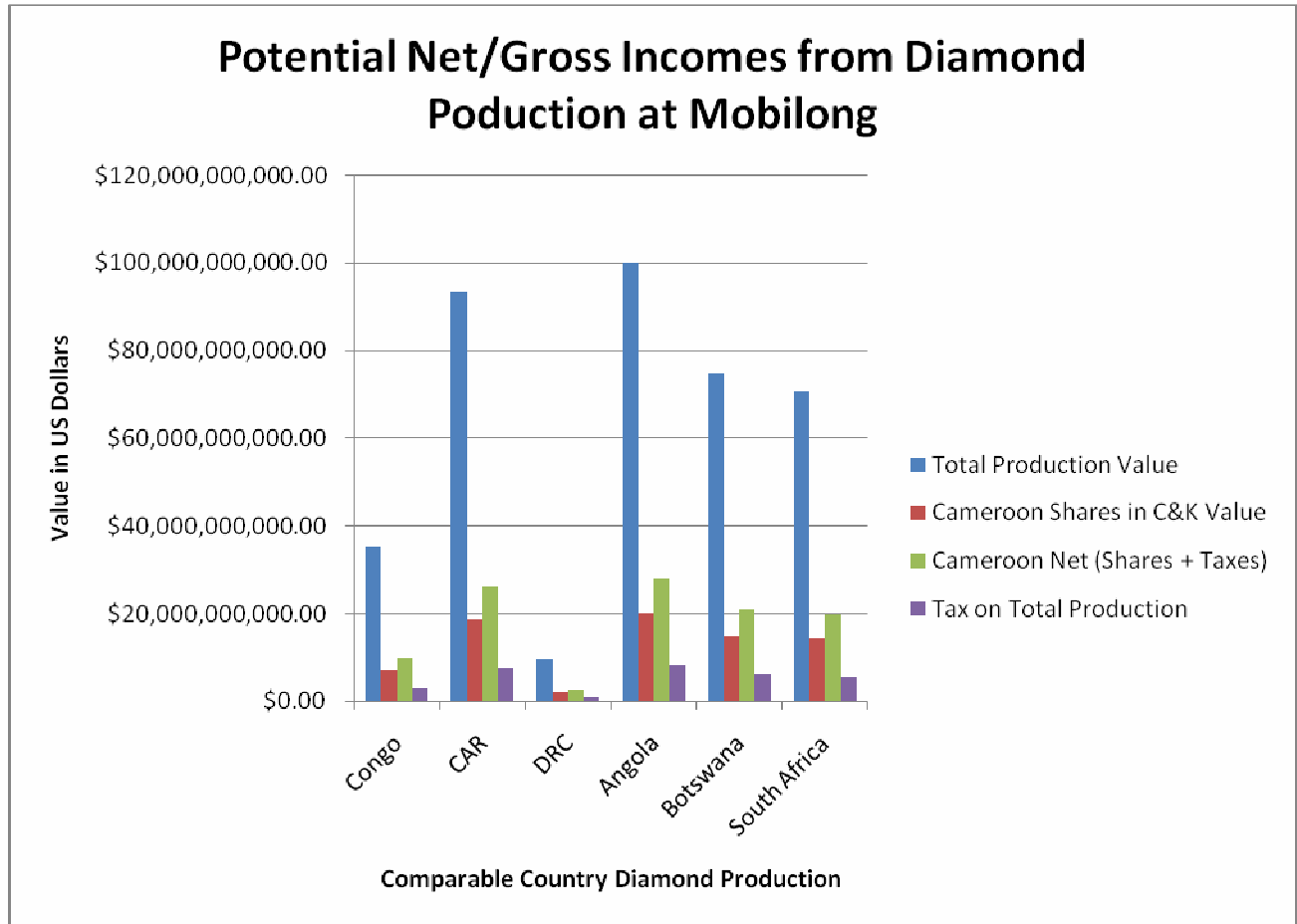


¹⁰² Courtesy of the WWF.



¹⁰³ Calculations made from 2008 Kimberly Diamond Production Statistics.

Appendix D



Final Notes:

Suggested Topics For Future Research

- Hydromine and Bauxite
- Environmental Impacts of any Cameroonian Mining Project
- National Investors vs. International Investors in the Mining Sector of Cameroon
- Encroachments on National Parks by Exploitative Industries in Cameroon
- The Effects of Mining Activities on Animal Activity in Lobeké/Nki National Parks
- Uranium in Cameroon
- Gold Mining in Garoua Boulai.
- Security Companies/Mercenaries Involvement in Exploitative Industries in Cameroon
- Indigenous Rights and the effects of Exploitative Industries

For more information about the subject, unattached information and **another report that describes my travels in the Southeast of Cameroon**, feel free to contact me at:

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